

Nicotine Patches and Gum

Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT's) such as the patch or gum help relieve withdrawal symptoms (e.g., irritability, headache, disturbed sleep, anger) or cigarette cravings that may be experienced when trying to quit smoking. After just a few weeks, the body will clear itself of nicotine, and these symptoms will go away.

Nicotine Patches

The patch provides a steady, controlled release of nicotine (absorbed through the skin) throughout the day. It does not release as much nicotine as does a cigarette, nor does the

patch contain the tars and poisonous gases found in cigarettes.

While the nicotine patch can take the edge off your cravings, it is not a "magical cure for smoking." The patch can give you an opportunity to make changes in your routine without having to deal with withdrawal symptoms. But it is also recommended that other (behavioral, psychological, environmental and social) support strategies be used in conjunction with the patch.

Over time, as you become more comfortable being a nonsmoker, a lower dose patch can be purchased to taper off, and then stop, the use of nicotine altogether.

What dosage will I need?

Those who smoke more than ten cigarettes a day are advised to begin with the step one (21 mg) patch and use it for six weeks. After that, taper to the step two (14 mg) patch for two weeks and then the step three (7 mg) patch for two weeks.

Those who smoke fewer than ten cigarettes a day are advised to begin with the step two (14 mg) patch for six weeks and taper to the step three (7 mg) patch for two weeks.

Patches are designed to be worn for 24 hours or for 16 hours. Be sure to review the instructions that come with the product you purchase.

How to use nicotine patches

Stop all use of tobacco. Apply the patch to any dry, non-hairy area of skin each morning. Most people use their upper arm, shoulder, back or thigh. Apply a new patch each day to a different location for seven days. Then, you may return to the original site. The patch can be used while showering and

swimming. If it falls off, replace it with a new patch. Carefully discard a used patch and its wrapper, as nicotine is toxic to children and pets.

Some people who use the patch develop a mild skin reaction of redness and itching. If this happens to you, rinse the area with cool water (you may also apply 1% hydrocortisone cream). If the reaction is severe, discontinue use of the patch and talk with your health care provider. Do not use the patch if you have an allergy to adhesives.

If you have vivid dreams at night while wearing the patch, try removing it before you go to sleep. Never cut the patch before application as this can result in over-dosing or under-dosing.

Nicotine Gum

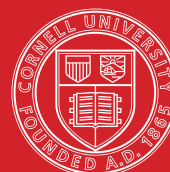
Similar to the patch, nicotine gum is a nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) that provides a steady, controlled release of nicotine (absorbed through the membrane of the mouth) throughout the day. It can be used to relieve withdrawal symptoms at the beginning of quitting, to relieve urges to smoke (cravings) while quitting, or to avoid relapse months after quitting when a new stress or situation may trigger a strong urge to smoke.

Like the patch, nicotine gum can help you make changes in your lifestyle without having to deal with withdrawal symptoms.

Over time, when you are more comfortable being a nonsmoker, use of nicotine gum can be reduced and then stopped.

What dosage will I need?

If you smoke fewer than 24 cigarettes per day, it is recommended that you use the 2 mg/piece of gum dosage.



Use one piece every one to two hours for the first six weeks. Then use one piece every two to four hours for the next three weeks. Finally, use one piece of gum every four to eight hours for the next three weeks, until you gradually stop usage. Some people may find that they can taper their use more quickly than recommended. Do not exceed 24 pieces of gum a day or 12 weeks of usage.

If you smoke 24 or more cigarettes per day, it is recommended you use the 4 mg/piece of gum dosage. Use one piece every one to two hours for the first six weeks. Then use one piece every two to four hours for the next three weeks. Finally, use one piece of gum every four to eight hours for the next three weeks, until you gradually stop usage. Some may find that they can taper their use more quickly than recommended. Do not exceed 24 pieces of gum a day or 12 weeks of usage.

How to use nicotine gum

Follow these instructions to ensure the most effective use of nicotine gum:

- Stop all use of tobacco. Nicotine gum works by providing the user a steady, controlled release of nicotine throughout the day to reduce withdrawal symptoms and cravings, while getting rid of the high peaks of nicotine that result from smoking. An occasional cigarette at any point in quitting can trigger a relapse.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) Facts

It is important to use any nicotine replacement therapy (such as the patch or gum) in a safe and effective manner. Keep the following facts in mind before beginning any NRT program.

- It is strongly recommended that users of NRT products refrain from smoking, chewing tobacco, using snuff or other nicotine products. This can trigger a relapse. It may also cause high levels of nicotine in the body creating side-effects such as: headaches, dizziness, upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, mental confusion, weakness or fainting.
 - If you have a medical problem such as heart disease or high blood pressure, consult with your health-care provider before beginning any NRT, even one that is available over-the-counter.
 - If you take any medication, especially for asthma or depression, speak to your provider before taking NRT's. The dose of a medication may need to be adjusted because the body changes when one stops smoking.
 - While NRT products enable you to make changes in your routine without having to deal with withdrawal symptoms, it is also recommended that behavioral, psychological, environmental and social support strategies be used in addition to any NRT program.
- Chew nicotine gum very slowly and intermittently to release the nicotine.
 - Take a couple of chews, until you get a tingling sensation or a peppery taste in the mouth. The only way nicotine from gum can be absorbed is through the membrane lining the mouth. *Nicotine that is swallowed will be wasted.*
 - Once the tingling sensation or peppery taste begins, park the gum in a cheek for a few minutes, then continue to chew every once in awhile when the tingling subsides to release more nicotine from the gum.

- One stick of gum can be chewed up to 30 minutes then discarded. In order to ensure the nicotine is absorbed correctly, avoid chewing and swallowing too quickly.
- Avoid acidic foods and beverages (coffee, colas, tea, fruit juices, etc.) 15 minutes before or while using the gum.

Additional information

Tobacco cessation can be challenging. For more information about Gannett services that can support you in this effort, go to www.gannett.cornell.edu

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